

1.0. INTRODUCTION:

THE TENNESSEE HIV/AIDS STUDY

By the end of 1995, the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) had documented 513,486 persons with AIDS in the United States, over 62% of whom had died. A total of 4,712 reported cases were among Tennessee residents, representing a reported case rate of just over 17 cases per 100,000 population, a 19% increase over 1994.² A growing awareness of regional variations in the onset of the AIDS epidemic and patterns of HIV transmission has prompted CDC to urge that state health departments track and analyze "local epidemics" more comprehensively.³ In response, the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) has commissioned the Community Health Research Group (CHRG) at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville to prepare this report, the first of a projected annual series on HIV/AIDS in Tennessee. Following a basic format suggested by CDC, this report addresses three fundamental questions:

- What is the past and current impact of HIV/AIDS on the population of Tennessee?
- Who is at risk for becoming infected with HIV?
- What is the sociodemographic and regional distribution of HIV/AIDS?

Key data sources include regional data from the national HIV/AIDS Reporting System (HARS); national, state and local studies of HIV seroprevalence; surveys regarding high risk behavior throughout the State carried out by the TDH Bureau of Health Services; and statewide studies of drug abuse among adults in households, high school students, juvenile offenders and arrestees conducted by the CHRG. No single data set can provide a complete picture of HIV/AIDS. Each should be scrutinized for its limitations, as well as its merits, and should be interpreted with caution. For a complete description of the main data sources used here, please refer to Appendix 1.

The organization of this report is adapted from the model suggested by CDC and followed by two other states, namely Massachusetts and Florida, in their annual AIDS reporting. Additional sections on seroprevalence surveys and estimates of HIV, as well as sections on high risk practices, are included here.

Because this is the first HIV/AIDS annual report for Tennessee, it seeks to trace the history of HIV/AIDS in the State, as well as to describe recent trends, the current

² CDC. **HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report** 1995;7,2:7. Based on year of report to the Centers for Disease Control. Tennessee Department of Health figures will differ from those of CDC due to use of year of diagnosis as the unit of comparison and to differences in the definition of Tennessee residence.

³ CDC. "Update: Trends in AIDS Among Men Who Have Sex with Men--United States, 1989-1994." **MMWR** 1995;44,21:404.